C. G. 596 children; later, married sons with adult offspring would separate from the family even if the father was still alive. The final stage was that each married couple set up a household of its own. The original joint family survived until recently in some remote corners, particularly among the Svan and the Pshav. There C. G. 476 is a tradition of mutual aid between families with regard to tasks exceeding the forces of a single unit (agricultural tasks, vintage, house-building, tapestry-weaving, etc.). These relations obtain even between unrelated families, C. G. 621 but often whole villages or sections of villages consisted of groups of related families (clans). Such family-settlements exist at the present time; a kolkhoz or a brigade in a kolkhoz may consist entirely of persons bearing the same family name.

C. A. 608 In the whole N. Caucasus and also in Armenia the institution of milk-relationship existed. A child suckled by a woman belonging to a certain family became related to that family, as did all its relatives, and these ties were considered as sacred as those of blood relationship. In the N. Caucasus such a relationship could also be established ritually in the case of older persons, namely by mere contact with a woman's breast; this was carried so far that even a forcible performing of this ritual could end a blood feud, as the act made the injured family and that from which "blood was sought" related "by milk." In this

C. A. 608 way, though all the members of a clan claim a common descent from the same ancestor, this descent is largely fictitious.

C. G. 565 642 Clans naturally differed in size and wealth, and this led in many parts of the Caucasus to a differentiation of classes and to a feudal structure of the society (Kabarda; lower regions of Dagestan). In Transcaucasia there was a further development into feudal monarchies (Georgia, Armenia). The original tribal structure was best preserved among the Georgian highlanders, the Svan, some of the W. Circassian tribes, the Ossetes, the Chechen and Ingush, and the tribes in the higher parts of Dagestan. For instance, the Pshav tribe (dziri, lit. "root") is divided into eleven clans (temi); the members of each clan bear the same name, but in everyday life are known under a second family name (gvari) derived from the proper name of a grandfather or great-grandfather. If a family expanded, new surnames were adopted. Where a differentiation of classes took place, the general pattern was the following. The upper class consisted of the nobility, in its turn subdivided into various ranks in the regions with more pronounced feudal traits (Georgia, Kabarda). The lower class consisted of the peasants; here too, a further stratification existed, depending on differences in degree of economic and personal freedom. The lowest classes were the slaves; mostly prisoners of war. In

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military career, as the qualities required there were most in conformity with the ideals handed down by native tradition.

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Among the higher classes in the N. W. Caucasus, the usage was to have their children brought up in a family of a lower class; this custom also existed among Western Georgian nobles in imitation of Circassian usage. Even before the birth of the child the aspirants vied with each other for the honor of being its atalyk (foster parent). The atalyk acquired all the rights of blood relationship; the ward upon completion of his education was naturally more attached to his foster parents than to his own, and could be counted on to avenge any harm done to his educators.

LAW AND CUSTOM

671 Among the moutaineers the rights and duties of each individual and penalties for offences were regulated in detail by an unwritten body of rules (adat), which remained largely unchanged among the Christian Kartvelians, and which never quite yielded to
628 Muslim law (shariate). Among the North Caucasians, a killing - whether deliberate or accidental -- resulted in a blood feud, which could last for generations. The revenge had to be carried out by a close male relative, usually a brother or son. Friends of the blood-guilty could try to arrange a peace, and the injured family could then accept a "blood-price," which varied according to the social rank of the victim.
[608] Also, the milk-relationship was considered so sacred that its establishment could end a feud. Thus among the Circassians a person guilty of blood could kidnap a young child from the injured family and bring it up; he thus became the child's atalyk and a milk-relationship was established between him and the family.

Besides manslaughter, blood feuds also resulted from abduction of married women, adultery, and from certain grave insults, e. g. throwing out of the house the kettle that was suspended over the hearth; among the Tush, who were seminomadic pastoralists, also from cattle-stealing.

681 For less serious injuries the adat prescribed in detail compensations in kind. E. g.

[Cf. cat. 116, pp. 527-528 -- Analyst]

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582 ghian mountain peoples. Early ecclesiastical law of Georgia and Armenia attacked next-of-kin marriages with great vehemence, while Islamic law *permitted* the Daghestanians to continue the practice, except, of course, the brother-sister marriages. The Armenian National Council of Ashtishat (A. D. 365) prohibited all marriages in the lateral line up to the third degree of relationship.[76] Later even fourth degree relatives were excluded from mating, while other Church decrees and tradition considered marriages between relatives even up to the seventh degree as incestuous.[77] Islamic law on the contrary, permitted first-cousin marriages.[78] Moreover the local and linguistic isolation of the [97] Lesghian tribes and constant family-feuds favoured endogamy. Today there are about 30 distinct languages in Daghestan and formerly there must have been many more, not to mention the numerous dialects. Some languages are spoken by as few as a thousand people, or as is the case with the Nakhada by only one hundred and thirty-five persons.

Although the Iranian culture area extended beyond North Caucasia, we have no evidence of the existence of the next-of-kin marriages in Northwest and Northcentral Caucasus. What kept the Cherkess and the Abkhaz from falling into line with their Eastern and Southern neighbours, or what has contributed to its early death after endogamy had been introduced, is not easy to say. The greater geographical remoteness from the centres of endogamy (Egypt, Sumeria, Elam, Arabia and Persia are the classical regions for brother-sister marriages), the well-established aristocracy with no danger of extinction, the strong, proud tradition regarding incest, the great respect for their own *adats*, the example of the élite of the Caucasus (the Kabardians), and Christianity seem to have been the main factors involved. We do not know if endogamy has ever existed among the Chechens.

2. The Impediment of Affinity

000 By an impediment of affinity we understand that degree of propinquity between a husband and a female relative of his wife or between a wife and a male relative of her husband which by law or custom is a bar to marriage. This particular impediment has not yet been sufficiently investigated by the field-workers; however we shall treat of this impediment indirectly when speaking of the levirate, sororate, and widow inheritance.

3. The Impediments of Fictitious Kinships

582 608 By fictitious kinship we understand any relationship based on grounds other than consanguinity or affinity. To what extent do such artificial kinships bar two Caucasians from mating? Fieldworkers have indeed investigated the various forms of fictitious kinship, but, unfortunately, not in relation to mating. There is still much to be done in regard to this important impediment.

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[76] Klidschian, "Das armenische Eherecht," *Zeitschrift f. vergl. Rechtsw.*, XXV (1911), p. 332 ff.

[77] Zdenko Vinski, "*Die südslavische Grossfamilie in ihrer Beziehung zum asiatischen Grossraum*," p. 138 (MS).

[78] G. Bergsträsser, *Grundzüge des islamischen Rechts*, p. 82.

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(1) The *Kunak*-relationship is a contract between two men of different localities according to which they are obliged to offer mutual hospitality and protection whenever the occasion lends itself. Whenever a Caucasian passes near a fellow-*kunak's* village while travelling, he will infallibly pay him a visit and will lodge with him at least for the night. Restaurants, inns, and hotels are unknown among the mountaineers; the institution of *kunak*-relationship is however, an excellent substitute. Any offense committed against the guest will be avenged as if it were against one of the family. In fact, the bond that unites the *kunaks* is considered as sacred as, if not more sacred than, the family tie. The institution is found throughout North Caucasia.[79] The question whether members of the two families may intermarry or not seems to have been overlooked by the fieldworkers. It may very well be that such marriages are even preferred. We know for certain that such marriages are not barred in Ossetia.[80]

(2) Another form of fictious kinship is the *tleush*.[81] According to Longworth it constitutes an impediment. The Cherkess, we are told, take an oath among themselves and become "brothers," and "to strengthen the illusion of their being such, their families are not allowed to intermarry; a regulation so rigidly observed, that even where the society is composed of many thousands, as in the case of the powerful one of Natquo, it still holds good, and a marriage between two individuals of it is looked upon as incestuous".[82]

(3) *Relationship by milk (parenté de lait, Milchverwandtschaft)* is a widespread institution. There are two ways in which the relationship can be formed: either by actual breast-sucking or by mere contact of the lips and breast of a woman.[83] The kinship thus formed is as sacred as that of consanguinity. Karginov describes how an Ossetine lover was once forced to kiss the breast of his beloved, the aim of the act being to put an end to their adulterous friendship, for once his lips would touch her breast he would become her "son." From that moment on intercourse and marriage would be looked upon as incestuous.[84] Gaerber wrote in 1728: "Whenever the Usmei has a son, he is carried round from village to village, and alternately suckled by every woman who has a child at her breast until he is weaned. This custom, by establishing a kind of brotherhood between the prince and his subjects, singularly endears

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[79] An excellent description of the *kunak*-relationship can be found in Dirr's article, "Aus dem Gewohnheitsrecht der kaukasischen Bergvölker," *Zeitschr. f. vergl. Rechtsw.*, XLI (1925). See also Interiano, *Della vita dei Zychi, chiamati Circassi*, Ramusio, II (1559), folio 140 v. M. Kovalevskij, *Coutume contemp.*, p. 190: Ossetes, Tartars, Kumyks have the practice too. N. Jakovlev, *Ingušī*, pp. 15—25.
Grabovskij, "Ekonomičeskij i domašnij byt žitelej gorskago učastka Ingulevskago okruga," SSKG, III (1870), pp. 4—7.
A. P. Berže, *Čečnja i Čečency*, pp. 86 f.
The host will even give up his life for his guest; see R. Erckert, *Der Kaukasus*, p. 108.

[80] M. Kovalevskij, *Coutume contemp.*, p. 214.

[81] For possible origin of the practice and ceremonies connected with the institution see V. V. Vasil'kov, "Očerk byta temirgoevcev," SMOMPK, XXIX (1901), No. 2, pp. 80 f.

[82] *A Year among the Circassians*, I, p. 229.

[83] Dubrovin, *Istorija*, Tome I, Bk. I, pp. 439 f.

[84] S. Karginov, "Kavkazskaja mest' u osetin," SMOMPK, XLIV (1914), No. 3, p. 283.

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them to each other."[85] The Utsmi or Usmi were rulers of Kaitag, said to date from the Arab conquest in the eighth century or soon after.[86] The custom of the Usmi did more than merely endear the baby prince to his subjects. The inhabitants actually considered the prince their foster-brother and for him they were ready to die, for milk-relationship implied as strong a tie as that of consanguinity.[87] The anonymous *Tagebuch* (p. 59)[88] gives us another example: an Ingush "murderer of an only son flies to the mother and, dagger in hand, compels her to give him her breast. Other relatives demand blood-revenge, but the woman, whose right it is to decide, says 'now that he has sucked my breast, if you kill him I lose *two* sons,' and the murderer's life is spared."[89]

Both forms of adoption, by actual and by ceremonial breastsucking, are in full accord with the *šarî'a*. According to the Koran, iv. 27, relationship by milk constitutes an impediment as stringent as that of blood propinquity. Excluded from marriage are the woman and her adopted child; the child and all those suckled by the same woman; the child with all his descendents and the woman who suckled him with all her milk and blood relatives and those of her husband. Such kinship is known in Islamic law as *raḍâ* or *raḍâ'h*[90]

It is difficult to determine just in how far the Caucasian practice is dependent on that of Islamism. The explorers and *adat* collectors fail to tell us to what degree marriage between milk-relatives is looked upon as incestuous. In all probability the institution existed in the Caucasus long before the introduction of the Koran. It seems to be pre-Islamic for various reasons. First of all, the custom is not limited to Mohammedan Caucasians but is found among Christian tribes as well, for example in Armenia.[91] Moreover it is very difficult to imagine that a *mere* ceremony, and a *foreign* one at that, could dispense a Caucasian from the most sacred obligation of avenging the blood of a murdered relative. Anyone who has studied Caucasian customary law will admit that perhaps no *adats* are so unchangeable as those regarding blood-feuds. It is unintelligible how an imported ceremony, especially among tribes that have been converted to Islamism rather recently and then only half-heartedly, could change these almost unchangeable *adats*. Finally, relationship by milk is neither an Islamic invention nor restricted to Mohammedan countries (it is found, for example, also among the nomadic peoples of Asia); it could exist in the Caucasus independently of Mohammedanism too.

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[85] G. Ellis, *Memoir of a map of the countries comprehended between the Black Sea and the Caspian nations and vocabularies of their languages*, London, 1788, pp. 40 f.

[86] Baddeley, *The Rugged Flanks of Caucasus*, II, p. 18, note. Ellis, *l. c.*

[87] Baddeley, *l. c.*

[88] *Tagebuch einer Reise, die im Jahr 1781 von der Gränzfestung Mosdok nach dem innern Caucasus unternommen worden*, Leipzig and St. Petersburg, 1797. A certain Steder is the author.

[89] Baddeley, *op. cit.*, I, p. 262.
U. Laudaev, "Priměčanija k statě čečenskoe plemja," SMOMPK, VI (1872), p. 50.

[90] Th. W. Juynboll, *Handbuch des islâmischen Gesetzes nach der Lehre der schâfi'itischen Schule nebst einer allgemeinen Einleitung*, p. 219.

[91] Baddeley, *op. cit.*, I, p. 263.

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582 597 relationship by milk. As is well known, Mohammed had an adopted son, his own emancipated slave named Zaid ibn Ḥâriṯah, who had a beautiful wife, at least beautiful in the eyes of the Prophet. Mohammed persuaded Zaid to divorce her and thus to make it possible for the Prophet to marry her. The faithful, however, were greatly scandalized, for the "sinless" Prophet married the wife of his "son". Mohammed seemed to have no way of extricating himself from this awkward position, but fortunately Allah had pity on him and favoured him with another revelation according to which all fosterage is sinful and non-existent. If anyone dares to call another person by the name of "father" and if that person did not actually beget him, he will infallibly be cursed by Allah and all His Angels.[104] In the Caucasus children are adopted and, as is the case with the Cherkess today, enjoy the full and equal rights of natural sons and daughters.[105] M. Kovalevskij found adoption in practice among the Ossetes. Here too the adopted son would be regarded as a true "son" who was able to perpetuate the family.[106] Formerly fictitious relationship could arise among the Cherkess by a mere pronouncement of the formula, "I adopt you," or "You are my daughter," or "You are my sister." From that moment the person adopted would have to consider the relatives of the person who pronounced the formula, as his own. A murderer could form a fictitious relationship in Ossetia by consecrating himself to his victim in a special ceremony at his grave.[107] Among the Ossetes adoption sometimes took place before the mother of the family. The person to be adopted would say to her, "From today on you are my mother; I am your son." The mother would then uncover her breast and answer, "I am your mother; you are my son."[108] As is only to be expected, adoption occurs very rarely, in fact only in extreme necessity to prevent extinction of the family. Adoption cannot be frequent because the mountaineers insist on purity of blood, and to adopt a child unnecessarily would imply giving away family property to a fictitious member.[109] Owing to the lack of data, we can only call the attention of the fieldworker to the following two problems: firstly, exactly *which* tribes consider adoption an impediment to mating; secondly, to which degree of fictitious relationship.

4. Disparity of Social Rank

505 [582] We now come to the obligation of marrying exclusively within one's own social rank. But before we can begin to speak of this form of endogamy we must briefly describe the social stratification in the Caucasus.

The NORTHWESTERNERS. The *Abkhazian* society was formerly divided into four distinct classes: (1) the princes, (2) the *Chinakma*, i. e., the

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[104] Koran, xxxiii, 5. Cf. J. Henninger, *Die Familie bei den heutigen Beduinen Arabiens und seiner Randgebiete*, Leiden, 1943, p. 64. Juynboll, *op. cit.*, p. 187. R. Roberts, *Das Familien-, Sklaven- und Erbrecht im Qorân*, Leipzig, 1908, pp. 39 ff.

[105] Ladyženskij, FT, p. 202.

[106] Kovalevskij, *Coutume contemp.*, p. 203.

[107] Kovalevskij, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

[108] *ibid.*

[109] Kovalevskij, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

TABLE 7*

Social Rank of Ossete Child of an Interclass Marriage

Mother → / Father · Child ↓	*uzden*	*farsagleg*	*kavdassart*	*gurziag*
uzden	uzden	kavdassart	kavdassart	gurziag
farsag.	farsagleg	farsagleg	farsagleg	gurziag
kavdass.	kavdassart	kavdassart	kavdassart	gurziag?** kavdassart?
gurziag	gurziag	gurziag (in Tagaursk child free)	gurziag	gurziag.

* This table is based on data found in Kovalevskij's *Coutume contemp.*, pp. 202 f.

** Is it gurziag or kavdassart? There seems to be a contradiction: on page 202 Kovalevskij maintains: "Ne peut naître d'un père kavdassard qu'un kavdassard, quelle que soit sa mère... Les kavdassards peuvent acheter et posseder les gourziaks qu'ils ont achetés; mais les enfants de ces gourziaks seront kavdassards, et appartiendront au propriétaire du kavdassard, c'est-a-dire, à l'ouzdanelag." On page 203 we find: "Les fils et les fille d'une esclave sont toujours esclaves, et, commes tels, dépourvus de tout droit."

(and here we may also include the majority of the Ossete tribes) and least insistent on marriages exclusively within one's own class. In fact we can almost say that the prohibition is non-existent in Chechnia and in the greater part of Ossetia. The "Lesghian Zone" occupies a middle position between these two extremes.

5. Other Forms of Endogamy and Exogamy

We do not maintain to have exhausted the possibilities of endogamy-exogamy regulations. These possibilities, however, have been more or less overlooked by the explorers. We refer, for examples, to the marriage impediments arising from disparity of occupation, disparity of cult, disparity of nationality. We know, for instance, that the Kabardians freely intermarry with the Russians and Karachai,[164] and that they marry any non-Cherkess, especially if the other party is a Mohammedan or is willing to accept the Islamic religion,[165] but is that the situation everywhere in the Caucasus? Till more fieldwork is done, such questions will have to remain unanswered. Midwives are sometimes considered related to the new-born, but we do not know how widespread the custom actually is. In regard to the impediment of disparity of cult we know that the Koran, ii. 20 f admonishes the Muslim: "Marry not a heathen woman before she be converted: a believing slave is much better even if she doth not please thee... The heathen woman will lead thee to hell, but Allah calleth thee to Paradise..." How strictly do the Islamic Caucasians observe this precept? There are doubtless many more lacunae that only the trained and exact fieldworker can fill.

[164] Ladyženskij, FT, p. 191.

[165] Ladyženskij, FT, p. 198.

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the guests have any questions, it is her girl-companion that must answer. The bride may at the most nod in affirmation.

She remains in her "hermitage" for some months before she is finally permitted to live with the rest of the household.[5]

The following description is chiefly that of the main Cherkess tribe, the Kabardians.

The *kalym* has been paid and the day of the wedding agreed upon. The relatives of the bridegroom begin the necessary wedding preparations. The odour of steaming beer and of the finest dainties creates a distinctive atmosphere, peculiar to a Kabardian wedding. On the eve of the marriage a group of men gallop through the *aul* inviting relatives to a preparatory feast, on the occasion of which a collection is taken to cover some of the expenses of the coming wedding, e. g., purchase of a veil for the bride, chartering of a bridal wagon.

On the following day young men fully-armed gather at the house of the groom and noisely gallop off to the bride's house. The bridegroom, however, does not go with them but "hides" at his best-man's house.[6] By doing so he becomes temporarily an adopted son *(kan)* of the latter's sib. A young companion called *shatso-kot* must always be at his side to protect him.

When the riders (or to be more exact, the bridal procession) reach the bride's house, her attendant, whom the riders brought along, is taken to the women's quarters, while the rest, after having feasted and danced till late into the night, are given lodging either in the house of the bride or of one of the neighbours.

Immediately after breakfast on the following day, the unusual hustle peculiar to a Cherkess wedding is observed outside the bride's house. The horses are being harnessed, the bride's belongings are being packed carefully but hurriedly into a trunk and put on the specially decorated bridal wagon. The bride herself is inside the house, being attired in her finest clothes. From her hair hangs a long white ribbon reaching to the ground. She is veiled, or rather, wrapped in a large white shawl. Her wedding dress differs but slightly from the ordinary Cherkess dress, except that it is made of more costly material. She is assisted on to the wagon and takes her place next to her ever-faithful girl-attendant. As soon as the bridal procession begins to move, the young men of the *aul*, all on horseback, try to snatch the caps away from the guests and thus begin the usual bridal horseraces. When the more "dignified" part of the procession enters the village of the groom, a wedding song is sung. By this time the racers have rested a bit and are ready to break into another wild chase. They again snatch one another's caps, throwing them on the ground, and as the rider gallops past one of the caps, he tries his skill at shooting a hole through it.

The bride is then taken by two women into the women's quarters, whilst outside the cracks of pistols and guns continue. The bride slowly sits down on a specially prepared bench, covered with a carpet. All eyes are fixed on her as a girl-friend of hers has the honour of removing the shawl.

While the riders outside are enjoying their beer, the youth of the village armed with long poles occupy a place difficult for the horsemen to pass. The

[5] Seidlitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 40 f; Deržavin, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
[6] C. Hahn, *Kaukasische Reisen und Studien*, p. 40.

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riders charge wildly, slashing their whips in all directions against their attackers whose task it is to prevent the horsemen form entering the house. The battle continues till the riders finally manage to jump over the fence or to break it down and thus force their way into the house. The " defenders of the bride " throw away their poles and begin dancing with the girls of the village. At noon they all enter the house to congratulate the parents of the groom. Dances commence again and last until midnight.

All this time, as we have already mentioned, the groom is absent, temporarily adopted by a neighbouring sib and guarded day and night by his *shatso-kot*. When the groom retires, the *shatso-kot* must spend the night in the yard protecting the bridegroom against any intruder. Never may he abandon his post. During the day it is his strict obligation to entertain the groom and this he usually does by horseback riding, away from the village. In the evening the two are joined by other companions. Toward midnight all leave except of course the *shatso-kot*, who must now accompany the groom to his bride.[7]

The first three nights, as a part of the wedding ceremony, the groom must undo the bride's stays.[8] Her corset is a broad red leather belt, which is sewed tightly about her waist and is never removed till the wedding night. According to Pallas, the corset was donned when she was 10 or 12 years old,[9] while other explorers claim that the corset was sewed on soon after the bride was born.[10] In any case, she may never take the corset off : it must remain untouched til it bursts and then it must immediately be replaced by another. The husband alone has the right to undo it, on the wedding night. The corset renders the waist very small in proportion to the shoulders, the purpose being to prevent the growth of the breasts, an essential requirement for Cherkess beauty.[11] In some places at least, the custom of wearing such stays has been recently discarded.[12]

Pallas and Ellis in their reports dating from the 18th century claim that the corset is " cut with a dagger, a custom sometimes productive of very fatal accidents."[13] Today untieing and not cutting the stays is the orthodox ceremony with the Cherkess[14] and the Ossetes. To cut them would subject the groom to endless ridicule.[15] Since the custom of *cutting* was " productive of very fatal accidents " we can easily understand why the pratice has been given up. Sometimes the bride's girl-friends maliciously tie a large number of very difficult knots, so that the temptation to make use of the dagger is not slight. On the first three nights the bride is not allowed to say a word to her husband.[16]

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[7] Hahn, *op. cit.*, pp. 40—44. For a description of a wedding among the Temirgoi see Vasil'kov, *op. cit.*, pp. 89—101.

[8] Ladyženskij, FT, p. 191.

[9] P. S. Pallas, *Bemerkungen auf einer Reise in die südl. Statth. des russ. Reichs etc.*, I, pp. 380 f.

[10] Ellis, *Memoir of a map etc.*, p. 24.

[11] Pallas, *l. c.*; Ellis, *l. c.*; Dubrovin, *Istorija*, I, i, p. 127. Prof. D. Wölfel has called my attention to a similar practice in Tyrol.

[12] For example, Ladyženskij could not find the practice in Kamenomostki Aul in 1927, FT, p. 191.

[13] Pallas, *op. cit.*, I, p. 381 ; Ellis, *l. c.*

[14] C. Hahn, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

[15] Baddeley, *op. cit.*, I, p. 270.

[16] Hahn, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

585 The Cherkess formerly had a very important ceremony, which however seems no longer to be observed, the virginity test.[17] Formerly if the bride were found to have lost her virginity before her wedding, she would be returned to her father, who would mercilessly mutilate, sell or even kill her.[18]

[591] A week later the so-called *unaishe* (i. e., "introducing the young wife into the household") takes place. Up to this time she had to live in her own quarters, but from now on she is considered a full-fledged member of the family. In the midst of much shouting and shooting, songs and cheers, the young wife is led into the house by two women. She is wrapped in a shawl and wears tiny [592] stilts attached to the soles of her shoes, which make her look unusually tall. She enters, stands shyly against the wall and then waits for someone to remove her shawl. Thereupon a woman places with her finger a sweet liquid called *urtsetl* into the mouth of the bride in order that her life in the new household may be ever as sweet as *urtsetl*.[19]

Only women were present in the house when the bride entered. They now all take a drink of beer from a large common vessel, then sing and finally break into a dance till wedding songs are heard from outside. This is a sign for the bride to come out, and as soon as she crosses the threshold, a boy standing on the roof, lets down a shower of confetti, nuts and tiny pasteries.

The bride then retires to her room, while the guests feast, drink and dance.

Some days later a ceremony called "Reconciliation" takes place. The bride's girl-friends take part in dances at the home of the groom while the young men join the bridegroom in his hiding place, where drinking is preferred to dancing. The groom then makes a little speech, thanking his "foster-father" [608] for his kindness, and in return for all the courtesies shown him during his "adoption," he offers him an ox or a horse. The groom has been "hiding" all this time, and now he feels that it is about time for him to seek "reconciliation" with his family. In the meantime a sheep has been slaughtered and beer has been prepared for a feast when the "prodigal son" returns. A special cup of beer sweetened with honey and a little "snack" are waiting for him on a small side-table. All eyes are riveted on the son who "ran away" from home. The young ladies are bunched together in a corner of the room; the old men are likewise huddled against one of the walls; the parents of the groom and an honoured guest, an old man, stand in another corner of the room, while the bride with her girl-friends stands in the doorway. Suddenly the loud voice of the honoured guest calls all to attention. "Dear son," he cries, "you think that you have offended us, but you are mistaken. On the contrary, you have caused us indescribable joy! Come take this drink as a reward! Come, son, drink it and let us forget about the past." The groom rises and slowly approaches the old man, accepts the beer and hands it to his attendant. Thereupon he steps outside of the house where he drinks the beer and together with his companions partakes of the "snack." After a while he retires, while his companions and guests continue their feasting and dancing till morning.

[17] Cf. Ladyženskij, FT, p. 184.

[18] Byhan, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

[19] *Urtsetl* is made of sheep's fat or butter mixed with honey.

8: Lužbetak E-4 (no date) 1951 RH1 Caucasia RH1

turn, must have stimulated the entire family to watch most carefully over the conduct of their daughters; and this watchfulness, again, must have been responsible for *adats* threatening the girl as well as any lover with the most severe sanctions not only for an actual perforation of the hymen but also, as the *adats* frequently express it, for any "suspicious approach."[109]

There have been other explanations offered for the virginity test. Westermarck, for instance, suggested masculine jealousy.[110] But this explanation is not applicable to the peoples of North Caucasia, for, as we have already mentioned, the sexual factor has very little significance in the selection of mates compared to the all-important economic, social, and religious factors. Such a jealousy, where mutual attraction matters so little, is unthinkable.[111]

(6) The custom of the bride thrice walking round the fireplace is an ancient wedding ceremony frequently found among pastoral tribes. As is well known, it was also the custom of the ancient Indo-Europeans. That one of the main wedding ceremonies in the Caucasus should take place at the fireplace is quite in keeping with the deep religious significance of the hearth. Among a large number of Caucasian mountain tribes, especially in North Ossetia, Ingushetia, and Daghestan, we find the custom of never allowing the fire in the hearth to die out, this practice being a form of cult for the dead.[112] The fire and especially the chain above it constitute a connection between the living and the departed. It forms a sacred asylum for any murderer, because as soon as he touches the chain the ancestors of the victim approve of the murderer's adoption into the family. The chain is the symbol of the family: to tear it down is regarded as one of the most abominable crimes imagineable, an insult to the living and dead members of the sib, which must be punished with death. The chain is a symbol of the family and therefore it must be buried with the last member of an extinct sib. To swear by the hearth-chain is an infallible sign that the person is saying the truth, for to do so falsely is unthinkable.[113] Such an oath would be a curse upon the entire sib and their ancestors. In other words, the ancient solidarity of the sib is intimately connected with the ancient religion of the North Caucasians, and the sanctuary of this religion is the hearth. Now, marriage is an act by which a stranger is taken into the family, and one of the most natural means, most in harmony with the ancient Caucasian form of life, is the hearth and hearth-chain. It is indeed striking that in Daghestan the cult of the fireplace still exists today but not the wedding ceremony. This fact confirms rather than disproves our explanation, for in Daghestan the wife was not a stranger: she had to be chosen from within the sib! (Cf. *supra*, pp. 51 f.)

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[109] *Infra*, Chapter XII, p. 176.

[110] The History of Marriage, I, p. 163.

[111] The jealousy would have to be so great that the disappointed husband would insist that the bride's nose be cut off or that she be otherwise mutilated and even killed, for such are the ancient adats!

[112] Günther, "Zusammenstöße zwischen Gesetz und Gewohnheitsrecht im nördlichen Kaukasus," *Zeitschrift f. vergl. Rechtsw.*, XLVI (1931), p. 324.

[113] *ibid.*